

Grizzly

Vol. 1 No. 8 February 2007

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Official Newsletter of the California National Guard

Commander's Corner

The Governor was re-elected, we have new representatives in both the state and federal legislatures, and many of our state constitutional officers are new; however, some things remain the same: the California National Guard is still overseas fighting in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, securing the Mexican border, participating in drug interdiction efforts, preparing for response to natural or manmade disasters, and transforming our Guard into the most modern and relevant state defense force in our 156 year history.

Last year, in response to a foiled terrorist plot that targeted inbound U.S. planes from Europe, California National Guard soldiers were ordered to six major airports. Once on duty, they supported airport security and law enforcement by augmenting existing security at vehicle checkpoints and conducting patrols within and around the airports.

At the request of the President, a joint task force was established along the Mexican border, to employ Cal Guard forces in support of the U.S. Border Patrol efforts to secure the border against illegal immigrants. Approximately

1,300 soldiers and airmen are assisting with logistics (maintenance and transportation), engineer projects (construction), observation and reconnaissance, and administrative support until such time as new border patrol agents can be hired, trained, and deployed.

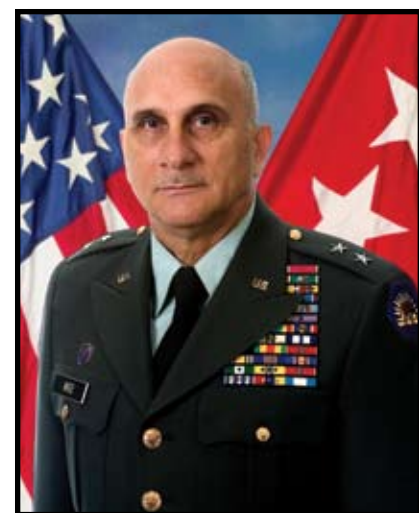
And, with more than 6,000 soldiers returning from overseas deployments, while deploying approximately 2,000 more in support of the Global War on Terrorism, California's support both here and abroad continue.

However, all this is not done without a robust and dedicated support network. With the continued dedicated and selfless service of the nation's premiere state defense force, I wanted to take a moment to acknowledge the patriotic and unwavering devotion our families, employers, elected officials, and communities provide. They understand the rigorous requirements that are placed on every Soldier and Airman. They endure interrupted lives and careers and families "put on hold," yet continue to encourage every one of them in their service to state and nation.

This past year has given us many

challenges and rewards. I want to thank everyone, the Soldiers and Airmen of the California National Guard and their support network of families, employers, and communities, for your dedicated efforts and tremendous contributions that making this organization the successful force that it is. Your loyalty, patriotism, hard work and dedication are appreciated by me, this great state and the Nation; and make the National Guard the most important part time job in America.

Leslie and I thank all of you for your service.



Major General
William H. Wade II

Senior Enlisted Advisor

Another year is upon us and the challenges of caring for a state and nation have not diminished. Fortunately for our Soldiers and Airmen we are supported by a community and administration that understands the trials and tribulations of balancing duty, family, employer, and commitment.

Not since WWII has the American military enjoyed such overwhelming support and gratitude. California Soldiers and Airmen continue to serve globally in support of the war on terrorism, without respite or an end in sight. This past summer we were asked to take on the chore of reinforcing our southern borders and providing operational support for United States Customs and Border Patrol (USCBP). Although the demands are great, California

guardsmen responded to the Presidential request on an all volunteer basis. An overwhelming response and a major strategic undertaking by our Joint Force planning team stood up the mission on schedule and made California the "model" for getting the job done on time and with a positive attitude.

Although we can boast success, we have to remember who makes us successful. First and foremost our families, without whose support and understanding we couldn't concentrate on the mission.

The support of spouses and family strengthens the resolve of our guardsmen and reinforces that what we do is not only right but necessary. Our employers, whose commitment is not only to the employee but to

that employee's family as well. We hear on numerous occasions how employers are ensuring that no employee of theirs is hurt by mobilizations, and these are not isolated incidents.

Communities, they are the heart and soul of the militia. That is where we harvest the patriots that are willing to lay down their lives so that others may enjoy the many rights guaranteed by our American Constitution.

Our greatest thanks go out to the many soldiers and airmen that serve on these missions everyday and ask nothing in return. These are the men and women of the California National Guard. Thank you for your service.



Command Chief Master Sgt.
Henry V. Fernandez

Grizzly
Newsletter

Vol 1. No. 8 February 2007
The Official Newsletter of the
California National Guard

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From the Editor,

January has been a whirlwind of activity. While approximately 2,000 Soldiers and Airmen are deployed world wide, more than 600 Soldiers are preparing to deploy to their mobilization sites next month. The California National Guard continues to answer the call of duty abroad and at home.

As Major General William H. Wade states "the National Guard is the most important part time job in

America." Our Soldiers, Airmen and their families have made a commitment to the military and United States. The Grizzly has made a commitment to these men and women to highlight their accomplishments and provide current information. Page 19 is always dedicated to News and Benefits. From how to expedite a passport application to new TRICARE benefits, this page can direct you to the resources you and your family might need.

Story Submissions:

If you have a story or event you would like featured in the Grizzly you have two options. You can submit an article as a feature story or you can send a 'blurb' for 'At a Glance.' Follow these simple guidelines:

Pictures - must tell a story, avoid posed or 'family portrait' style and be highest resolution possible.

For 'At a Glance' write five to six sentences that states the why, what, when, who and where.

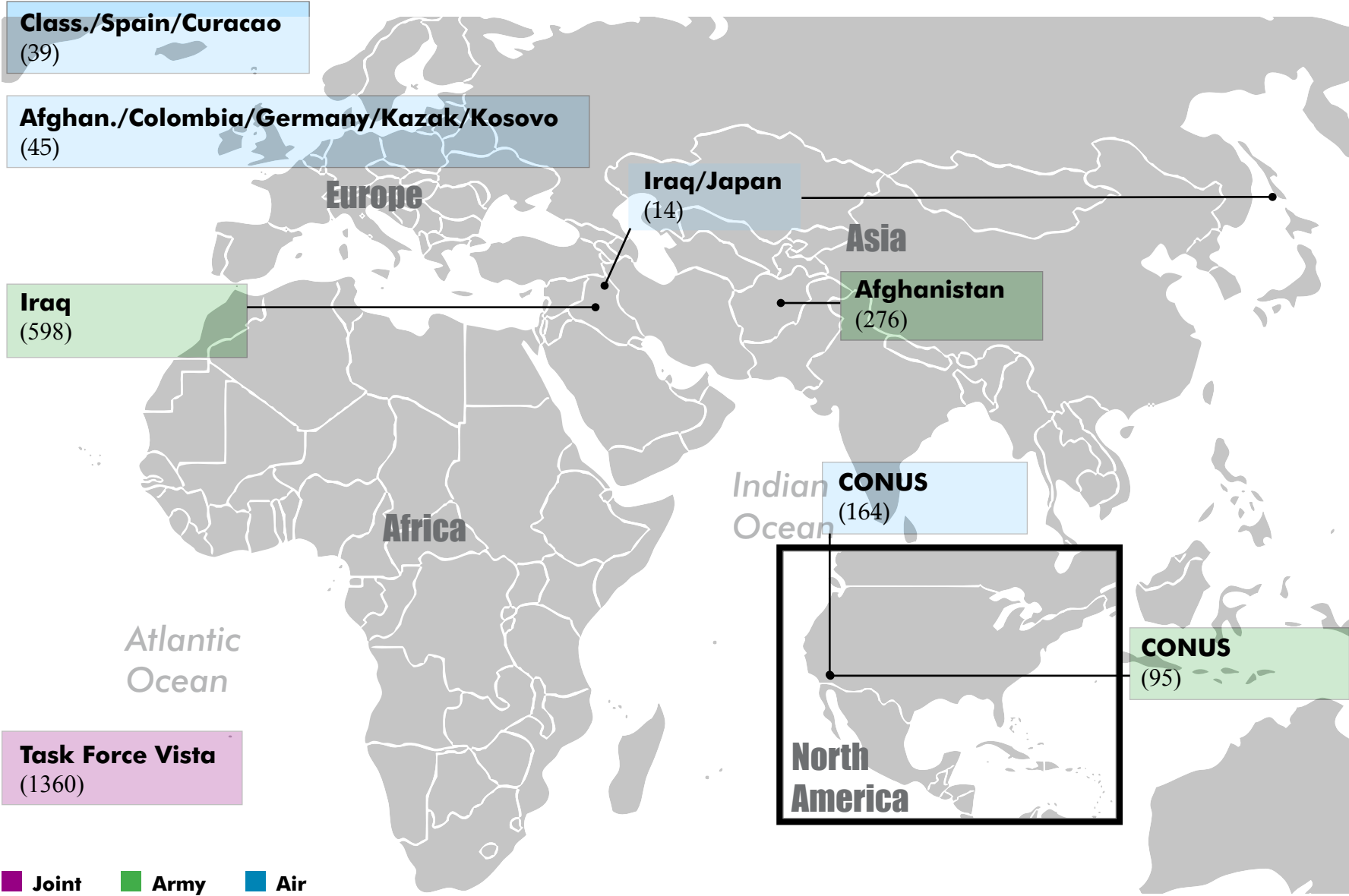
Remember to include photographer credit and identify personnel in picture - Rank and CORRECT SPELLING of names.

Email story submissions and/or comments to:
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bringing you
and your
family the
latest in
News and
Benefits

Where We Are

The California National Guard as of Feb. 2007



Operation Jump Start: Six Months and Counting

Story and photos by Master Sgt. Michael Drake

It is unlike any mission the National Guard has undertaken. Recruit, train and deploy an all-volunteer unit of 1400 individuals in a federally funded, Title 32 status to serve in a joint-force, inter-agency homeland security mission. The challenges have been daunting and numerous; but six months into OPERATION JUMP START the mission is described as an overwhelming success.

It began in May of last year when President Bush called upon southwest border state governors to utilize National Guard troops to provide support to the U.S. Customs and Border Patrol along the nation's southern boundary with the objective to gain and maintain operational control of the U.S. southern border.

Operations would include, but not be limited to, "operating surveillance systems, analyzing intelligence, installing fences and vehicle barriers, building patrol roads and providing training." In all 6,000 National Guard troops would deploy between San Diego and the Texas Gulf Coast. The National Guard support to CBP would be a temporary bridge until civilian law enforcement could increase its capabilities by recruiting, training, and fielding an additional 6,000 agents.

Certain conditions were set forth: The National Guard would perform the mission under the command and control of state governors (Title 32) with funding provided by the federal government. The deployment could not degrade National Guard capabilities to respond to other DoD missions or state emergency disaster preparations or response. National Guard personnel would serve in support roles only, and would not engage in law enforcement activities to include apprehension, custody or transport. The mission would rely principally on volunteers and OIF/OEF veterans would not be involuntarily called. Finally the mission would end no later than December 2008.

In June, Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger authorized deployment of California National Guard forces to Operation Jump Start. Joint Task Force VISTA, comprised of California Army and Air National Guard forces, was formed.

The original command element under the leadership of Col. Kevin Ellsworth and Command Sgt. Major Jose Gomez, met in Sacramento the week of June 12 and designed



A dump truck driven by an engineer from Task Force Steel Castle of JTF VISTA proceeds along the secondary fence that runs along the U.S. – Mexico border. National Guard engineers have erected the 8-10-foot-high primary and 15-foot-high secondary fences, built the all-weather road that runs between the fences, and constructed various drainage projects. Other projects include vehicle barriers and camera and lighting towers strategically placed along the border.

the mission structure, its operations and other mission sets. The very next week staff assembled in San Diego and began receiving the first of what would be hundreds of National Guard volunteers.

There were numerous challenges. Facilities to include office space had to be secured, along with equipment such as laptops, cell phones, and vehicles. Another challenge: where to house an incoming force of over 1,000, both for the short term and long term. Another was how to recruit over 1,000 volunteers, cut orders for them, process them, conduct physicals, and deploy them along the border.

After initial processing and a series of briefings on the mission, forces began deploying to the San Diego and El Centro Sectors. A substantial portion of the mission would include Entry Identification Teams (EIT), those positioned at remote sites monitoring the border 24/7 using binoculars and thermal imaging scopes. These would be the additional "eyes and ears on the border."

Others would be assigned as camera operators in the Remote Video System or would work on maintaining and repairing Border Patrol vehicles and buildings. Still others would be assigned to administration and training duties, such as range safe safety officers.

Other mission elements would include a medical squadron, a headquarters squadron, and aviation task force to conduct aerial surveil-

lance, fly terrain denial missions, and transport border patrol agents to remote and inaccessible areas.

The engineering detachment that had been constructing fences, all-weather roads, drainage structures, lighting and camera towers and other infrastructure since the 1980s would more than double in size. The concept was use the National Guard as a force multiplier in order to free up Border Patrol agents from auxiliary tasks and let them resume their primary law enforcement duties. In a word, "put more badges on the border."

Several persons from the 146th Airlift Wing have served on the task force, including Col. Marilyn Rios who served as deputy commander with the original command group, Lt. Col. Michael N. Dugas and Senior Master Sgt. Daniel J. Dizacomo who both helped launch the mission before there was even a desk in place, and Lt. Col. Dana R. Dorsey and Senior Master Sgt. Adrienne M. Martinez have continued work in J4. Lt. Col. Claiborne W. Cowgill, Jr. has served in J1.

Chief Master Sgt. Patti A. Rusconi is the senior enlisted person in Task Force Phoenix (the medical squadron). Task Force Steel Castle (the engineers) is headed by Maj. Jeff A. Garland and Chief Mater Sgt. Ken W. Cedeno. Master Sgt. Jerry C. Parrish has diligently worked billeting issues since the onset finding temporary and permanent housing from El Centro to San Diego and points in between. Technical Sgt. Mike P. Muller of the multi-media

shop has documented much of the mission and has already produced two outstanding video productions outlining the mission sets.

To date, JTF Vista Public Affairs staff have conducted over 150 media interviews to include national and statewide media, as well as thirteen international outlets including Finland, Denmark, Norway, Hungary, Korea, France, Japan, and several from south of the border.

The mission has been called a great success by U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, the Chief of the National Guard Bureau, and even media - on both sides of the border.

In California, National Guard EIT personnel have been credited with the apprehension by Border Patrol agents of hundreds of individuals crossing the border illegally, to include some high-profile individuals on the "wanted list."

During a Thanksgiving visit to the border mission, Lt. Gen. Steven Blum, Chief of the National Guard Bureau, said the mission was "an outstanding combination of the National Guard and the Customs and Border Patrol working together to make our nation safer.

General Blum said he was "tremendously impressed with the commitment and dedication of these great citizen soldiers...They are magnificent. That's why they are here. That is why we are the National Guard."

Marin County Warming Shelter

Story and photos by Spec. Michael Amicy

Extreme cold weather in California led to State of Emergency declaration followed orders by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for National Guard armories to open to help the homeless as Bay Area temperatures dip into the 20s overnight. Eleven National Guard armories including those in Marin, Gilroy, Sunnyvale and Santa Cruz have been opened as emergency shelters in response to the National Weather Service prediction of extremely cold weather. Area temperatures are expected to be the lowest in 10 years.

The National Weather Service reported that an arctic air mass will move across the Bay Area, setting the stage for very cold weather and several hours of life threatening freezing temperatures in the interior valleys.

"This community really appreciates the California National Guard" states Mary Kay Sweeney of Homeward Bound. Sweeney helps coordinate various residential services with Marin Country and the 250th Military Intelligence (MI) Battalion Armory located at San Rafael, California. "Our organization worked with the 250th MI Soldiers to use their Armory in a similar crisis in 1988 and the unit once again has opened its doors proving once again that the community can count on the guard. This is a true testament that the Civil Support System works. This proves that our organization, the Red Cross and the Guard can shelter, feed, and clothe people in case of a crisis, whether it is an flood, earthquake, or extreme weather conditions.

Purple Heart recipient Staff Sgt Christopher Van Meter and his wife Spec. Elizabeth Van Meter, who served together in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) III, are once working together to save lives. Staff Sgt. Van Meter a fulltime High School teacher (Ceres High School in Ceres, CA) was called into duty right after his last class Friday afternoon to help monitor the facility, maintain headcount, and assist the staff of Homeward Bound and the Red Cross.

"It is wonderful that the guard is making a difference not only overseas, but we like to let our community know we are also here to support each other." Staff Sgt. Van Meter stated. "Within 20 minuets of the news broadcast about CNG providing armories in support of civil authority warming center activities in our area, we received



Staff Sgt Christopher Van Meter and his wife Spec. Elizabeth Van Meter, sort out donated materials for distribution.

many phone calls from the community seeking ways to help out."

"The generous community of San Rafael donated over 100 coats / jackets, 55 towels, 19 blankets, 27 shirts, 15 pair of pants, 35 pair of socks, over two dozen pairs of hats and gloves, several hundred sets of sundry sets, 9 pairs of shoes and boots, and plenty of food for everyone utilizing the temporary warming shelter. I was absolutely amazed!"

The first night of the armory opening, 21 males and six females were bused in from several other county shelters which were overwhelmed, to stay at our armory and escape the deadly cold. The Marin Sherriff department dropped of an individual they found at two in the morning freezing out in the cold. Cold temperatures like those predicted can be life-threatening.

Bruce Jacks, executive director of the Ritter Center, said a two-year-

old study suggested that as many as 75 people are turned away from Marin shelters each night. The armory can accommodate at least 100.

It's really something that's happening countywide," Jacks said. "Most of them stay near the central cities - San Rafael, Novato, Ignacio - but there are homeless in Sausalito. There are homeless in Bolinas. Some of them stay in their vehicles, if they can't find appropriate shelter. Some of them are in encampments up in the hills, and some of those are well set up, with tents and sleeping bags. Others are couch surfing, staying at a different friend's from night to night."

Dennis McGee Volunteer for the Red Cross stated "the Guard has shown they have a genuine concern to help anyone in need. The Guard has been really helpful, without them we would have definitely lost some lives."



The generous community of San Rafael donated clothing and food to the Warming Shelter.

A Step Forward

By Maj. Steve Fetrow

Sitting on my desk there is a Mental Health Advisory Team (MHAT-III) Operation Iraqi Freedom 04-06 Report. As you can guess from the title, this is the third such report documenting the situation in Iraq. Specifically, the report seeks to discover two things: (1) How are our servicemembers doing in Iraq? (from a mental health perspective), and (2) How is our mental health program working in Iraq?

The report details 11 key findings and 11 recommendations. This report is especially relevant for our deployed, redeployed, and soon to be deployed Soldiers and Airmen. As I write this article, I am currently involved in a SRP at Camp Roberts working with many Soldiers preparing to mobilize in the very near future. Being a combat veteran myself, I have a very special heart for our servicemembers performing their duties in harm's way. They are always on my mind and in my heart. Therefore, I read and re-read this report with great interest from both a personal and professional perspective.

OK, on to the first question, how are our service members doing in Iraq? According to the MHAT-III, our soldiers are significantly more likely to report personally knowing someone who has been seriously injured, killed, or experiencing an IED. Our service members also report a higher percent-

age of being in a life-threatening situation than in the past reports and list confusion about the current rules of engagement as an additional problem. In other words, our service members are dealing with combat stress and according to the report, the stress is growing. Additionally, our service members report stress related to family separation and the length of deployments. Many of the Soldiers I talk with here at Camp Roberts echo those fears and concerns. The new policy to send even more troops to Iraq has caused an even greater sense of unrest and concern, especially with soldiers who have already been deployed.

Service members reported similar ratings of personal morale but higher levels of unit morale. Most service members deployed for a second or third time to Iraq state that the military is doing a much better job preparing their units for deployment than when they were deployed initially. Even so, these service members report a higher level of acute stress than do Soldiers serving on their first deployment. The most alarming statistic in the report is regarding suicide. According to the MHAT-III, in the Army alone the suicide rate for Soldiers serving in OIF is 19.9 per 100,000 Soldiers. That statistic is in comparison to 13.1 per 100,000 soldiers serving otherwise in the Army. The MHAT-III states that service members believe that the military

needs to provide more adequate training with regard to this critical issue.

So, in a word, our service members serving overseas are STRESSED.

That being the case, how is our mental health program working in Iraq? This answer reveals a very POSITIVE step forward. First off, the MHAT-III states that the stigma surrounding mental healthcare continues to decrease. The vast majority of service members in Iraq report that it is fairly easy to access mental health care. 30% of the service members surveyed reported receiving mental health services while deployed! I had to re-read this statistic and key finding about 100 times for it to sink in. Reduced stigma and easy access has enabled our mental health programs in Iraq to reach 30% or more of the service members deployed. That means that even though these brave men and women are in harm's way and dealing with the great stress of combat and separation from their loved ones, they are not dealing with this stress alone! Service members are learning that it is not a sign of weakness to seek assistance but a sign of personal strength. Servicemembers are learning that even in the midst of great stress there are people who are able and willing to help them deal with the stress and a great number of our military members are seeking such help. This tells me that some-



Major Steve Fetrow
thing is working!

As the Civil War General states, "War is Hell". Unfortunately, war is also a reality and the brave men and women of the California National Guard have been called to support the war effort. In dealing with this reality, we are doing everything possible to provide support and assistance for our service members. The MHAT-III reveals that our efforts to help are working and that our service members are getting the help they need to deal with the great stress they are under. This is a step in the right direction.



U.S. ARMY NEWS RELEASE

Army Announces Results of Third Mental Health Advisory Team Survey

The Department of the Army announced Dec. 19 the results of the Army's third Mental Health Advisory Team, which is a snapshot of the morale and mental health of deployed Soldiers last Fall in Iraq.

The Office of the Army Surgeon General established the Mental Health Advisory Team III at the request of the Commanding General, Multi-National Force-Iraq. MHAT III continued the precedent of deploying advisory teams to Operation Iraqi Freedom to assess behavioral healthcare requirements of Soldiers. MHAT I and MHAT II conducted their assessments in September and October of 2003 and 2004, respectively. MHAT III deployed to OIF during October and November 2005.

MHAT III focused on the behavioral health of Soldiers, the behavioral healthcare system in Iraq, and the future focus for care of Soldiers engaged in combat.

MHAT III surveyed 1,461 Soldiers, 172 behavioral-health providers, 172 primary-care providers and 94 unit ministry team members. This is the first time the MHAT included Soldiers of the Multinational Security Transition Command-Iraq who are engaged in advising and training Iraqi forces, and the first time the survey included Soldiers on their second assignments in Iraq.

This study confirmed that the improved OIF behavioral healthcare system is helping Soldiers deal with the stress of combat. Behavioral health care providers reported confidence in their ability to treat combat and operational stress reactions. Soldiers reported higher unit morale than in previous studies and generally reported high job satisfaction. The team found that the top non-com-

bat stressors were deployment length and family separation.

Among those Soldiers surveyed, 13.6 percent reported acute stress symptoms and 16.5 percent reported a combination of depression, anxiety, and acute stress. These rates were lower than during OIF I and higher than OIF II. Multiple deployment Soldiers indicated they were better prepared due to improved pre-deployment training. They also noted more stress on families and not enough time between deployments. Among those Soldiers serving a repeat deployment, 18.4 percent reported acute stress versus 12.5 of the Soldiers serving an initial deployment.

The suicide rate among Soldiers in support of OIF (Iraq and Kuwait) during 2005 was 19.9 per 100,000 Soldiers - similar to the 18.8 rate per 100,000 Soldiers in 2003 and higher than 2004. Soldiers reported receiving suicide prevention training before and during deployments, but the number who perceived this as useful in identifying fellow Soldiers at risk declined from 60% in 2004 to 55% in 2005.

The MHAT III found a significant increase in the perceptions of availability of behavioral health care. Ninety-five percent of the Soldiers surveyed reported ready availability of mental health care. Soldiers also reported that the stigma associated with seeking behavioral health care is decreasing.

According to LTG Kevin Kiley, Army Surgeon General, "We must support our Soldiers' health needs, both physical and mental; these advisory teams help us to know how and where we can better meet those needs. We will continue to review the recommendations from the Team and further improve behavioral healthcare for Soldiers deployed to Iraq and Army-wide.

For a copy of the MHAT-III Report log on to the Army Medicine webpage at: http://www.armymedicine.army.mil/news/mhat/mhat_iii/mhat-iii.cfm

Words from Command Sergeant Major Clark Jr.

I assumed the duties of State Command Sergeant Major of the California Army National Guard on June 15, 2006. It has been a very busy six months for the Army National Guard. We have continued to train, prepare, and deploy Soldiers in support of the Global War on Terror. The California National Guard is also undergoing transformation to better align our units for future State and Federal requirements.

My top four priorities are Retention, DMOSQ, NCOES and Soldier care. Retention continues to be a challenge as we convert to our new formations; however, rest assured that we have a position for every Soldier. As we change our formations, Soldiers may be asked to change their MOS to be part of new units being formed. Leaders at all levels must counsel individual Soldiers about being an integral part of the future force of the California Army National Guard.

Our Soldiers must be DMOSQ (Duty Military Occupational Skill Qualified) in their current assignment. As we all know, funding is driven by retention and DMOSQ. We, as senior noncommissioned officers, are responsible for individual training of our Soldiers. We must counsel each individual Soldier on the importance of training and schedule them for all required schools immediately. My goal is to exceed the mandatory 85% DMOSQ within the next 12 months; and with continued strong leadership we will.

The Noncommissioned Officer Education System is critical to training our young leaders of today. We must counsel, mentor and schedule each Soldier for their leadership training. The building block today for NCOES is the Warrior Leader Course that trains basic leadership skills. The Sergeant and Staff Sergeants are leading the ground fight on the Global War on Terror.

Since 9/11 California Army National Guardsmen have deployed all over the world in support of the Global War on Terror. Ensuring that we are providing for individual Soldiers and their families is critical to our success. Many Soldiers have volunteered for multiple deployments with support of their families. While the Soldiers are deployed, we at home must ensure that their families' needs are met. We must build and maintain total family support for all Soldiers to meet our goals and be successful.

The Noncommissioned Officers Corps in the California Army National Guard is committed to supporting our Soldiers. We all understand that we only exist to take care of the needs of our Soldiers and their families. I task all NCO's in the Army National Guard to stay focused as we continue to fight the Global War on Terror.



Command Sergeant Major William Clark Jr.

Red Ribbon Flyover

Story and photos by Chief Warrant Officer Marc Yablonka

MURRIETA, CALIF.--"You see the shimmering on the water?" Chief Warrant Officer Mirko Duvnjak, commander of B-Company, 640th Aviation Support Battalion, asked 1st Lt. Matthew Frieberg, B-Co., 1st of the 140th Air Assault Battalion, as he banked their UH-60 Blackhawk helicopter above Huntington Harbor, Calif. "When I was in Iraq," said the commander, "I always thought of that (the sea). It's really beautiful."

Today, Duvnjak is flying not in Iraq, but the Murrieta Valley. He is part of a Red Ribbon Flyover. The Red Ribbon Flyover the mission is the brainchild of Eric Lahti, former Major, Deputy Commander of Rear Operations of the 40th Infantry Division. Lahti began the flyovers in 2002, in partnership with the Murrieta Valley, Calif. Unified School District and his volunteer non-profit organization, the Murrieta Anti-Drug, Alcohol, and Tobacco Abuse Coalition (MADATAC).

Coordinated with the city, local police department, school district, the Youth Accountability Board of the Riverside County Probation Dept., Mulligan's Family Fun Center, and Friday Night Live, the flyover consists of a Blackhawk circling over 12 schools in the Murrieta district after students had gathered on the football fields of each and spelled out anti-drug messages which

could be seen from the air. Pride is an emotion that runs through the staffs of all the organizations involved. "We work together to create a uniform environment with an anti-drug message," said Maj. Lahti over lunch at the French Valley Airport Café after the flight.

The program is tailored not so much for the kids who avoid substance abuse, but for those who might have run afoul of the law and committed misdemeanor crimes in

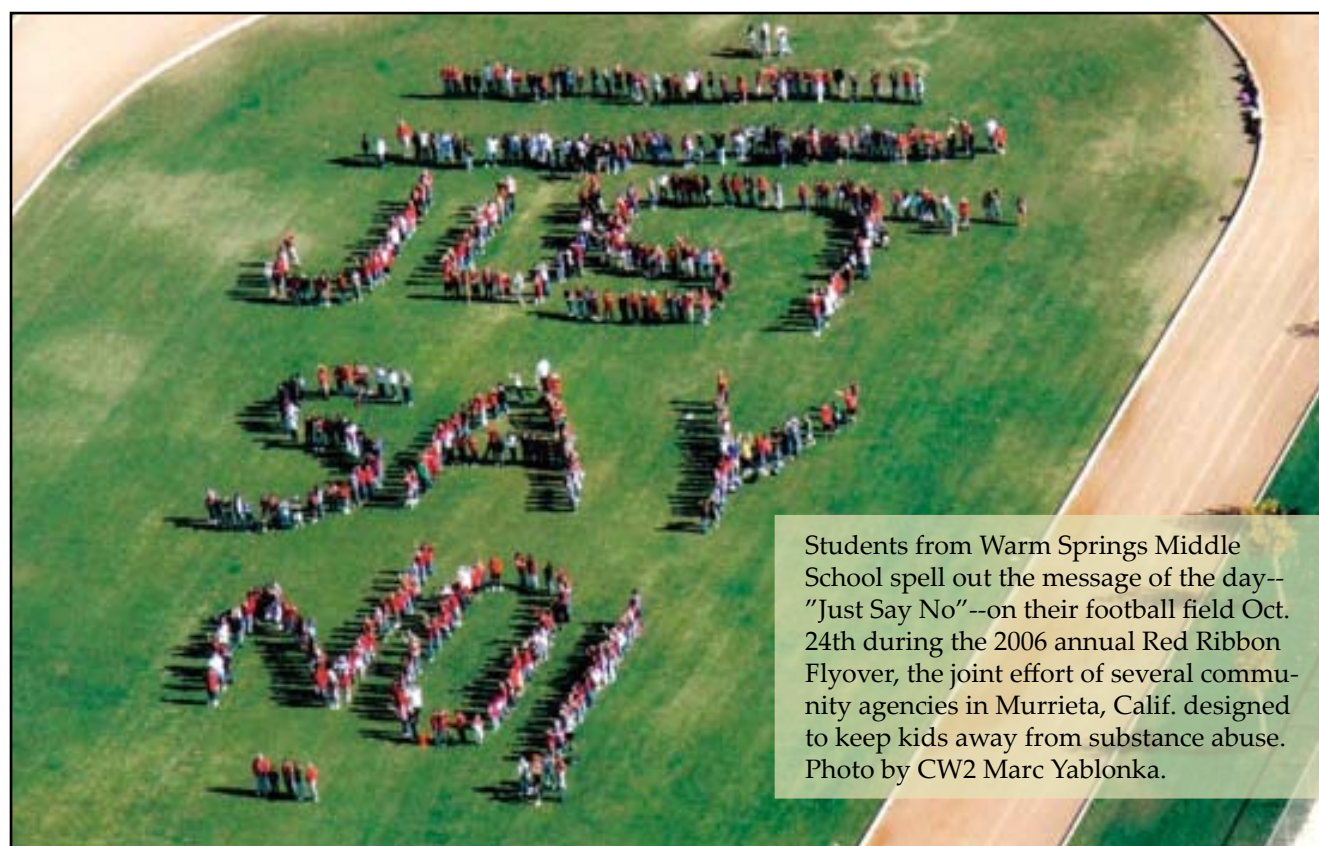
the past. The youth Lahti and MADATAC are most concerned about are those under 18 with minor drug offenses and convictions for crimes like shoplifting.

"Instead of waiting for a kid to mess up, the schools in the Murrieta Valley Unified School District identify potential problem kids and contacts," Lahti said.

The agencies then work together to keep the kids from getting into trouble again, Harkins added.

For their part, the crew of the Blackhawk was equally enthusiastic about the mission.

"The best part was seeing, the excitement of the kids when we flew over their school," 1st Lt. Frieberg said. "If participating in a program like this helps someone say no to drugs, as well as puts smiles on the kids' faces, then I feel this mission is a tremendous success," the Lt. added.



Students from Warm Springs Middle School spell out the message of the day--"Just Say No"--on their football field Oct. 24th during the 2006 annual Red Ribbon Flyover, the joint effort of several community agencies in Murrieta, Calif. designed to keep kids away from substance abuse. Photo by CW2 Marc Yablonka.

Kuwait Soldiers Give Warm Welcome to Fellow Troops

By Spec. Debrah A. Robertson

Camp Buehring, Kuwait— After saying goodbye to their families, their children and their parents, and days of travel with no showers and living on trail mix and airplane food, Soldiers, Sailors, Marines, Airmen and Coast Guardsmen drag their duffle bags onto buses and prepare to travel to Camp Buehring for weeks of training with Third Army/U.S. Army Central and other units in the extreme temperatures of Kuwait.

Loaded with heavy equipment, plated protective vests, rifles, advanced combat helmets, sleeping bags, ruck sacks and scores of necessary gear, weary troops drag themselves into a large tent and take their seats before a projection screen.

To their relief they are met with the smiling, friendly faces of fellow servicemembers who have been in their position, tired and a little nervous about the unknown.

“We’re the first people in uniform they see when they get on the ground,” said Sgt. Kasey Schmidt, a supply sergeant with the 40th Personnel Support Detachment.

The Soldiers of the 40th PSD, 678th Personnel Services Battalion work as a bridge from the garrison environment to the theater,



introducing servicemembers into Kuwait and eventually Iraq. Other than making sure service members’ paperwork and therefore their promotions and pay go smoothly, the 40th is there to greet those who are new to theater, said Sgt. Shawn Anderson, the noncommissioned officer in

charge of personnel service support of the 40th PSD.

Swiping their common access card is the first step to kick off their countdown in theater, and then servicemembers are given the necessary briefings they need in order to stay as safe as possible

and help everything run efficiently for them on the ground, said Anderson.

As a whole, the detachment’s job entails working promotions, making identification cards, completing enlisted and officer record brief updates, processing noncommissioned officer evaluation reports and managing the deployed theater accountability software, which tracks servicemembers on the ground so they receive their pay and all their entitlements as a deployed servicemember, said Sgt. 1st Class Fernando Cisneroz, the 40th PSD’s first sergeant.

The 40th is also responsible for actions, such as name changes, managing foreign language details, the married couples’ programs and applying skill level identifiers to the enlisted record briefs of Army Soldiers, said Noah Radley, a personnel services clerk with the 40th PSD.

Simply put, “Our function here is taking care of Soldiers before they go up north,” said Cisneroz of his unit.

So when servicemembers are weary and travel worn, the last thing they have to worry about is whether or not they will receive the correct pay or whether they will make the next rank even though they are in the field.

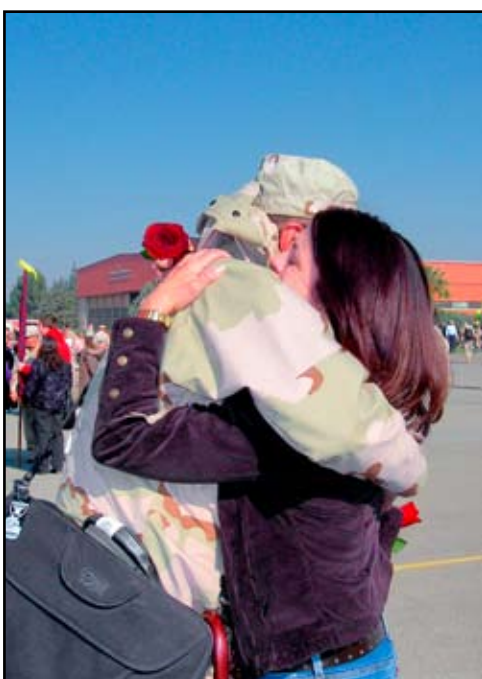
The Family Assistance Network: A “One Stop Shop” for Assistance and Information

By Kimberly Crawford Gorski

Is your spouse deployed? Are you a service member who needs resource information? Does your family live too far away to attend your units Family Readiness Group Meetings (FRG) and you feel out of the information loop? The Family Assistance Network is your answer! The FAN provides a “One Stop Shop” for assistance to service members and their families.

Due to the level of deployment, The California National Guard’s Operation Ready Families Program (ORFP) has established the Family Assistance Network (FAN), a group of coordinators located throughout California. These FAN Coordinators are available to answer questions as well as pass on essential information to families involved in any branch of the military.

Along with assisting volunteers and family



members, the FAN also offers once a month “We Care” meetings, covering topics from tax preparation to understanding your military benefits. These meetings give families the opportunity to establish a local support network as well as learn new tools. The meetings are especially helpful to families who are not close to their units Family Readiness Group (FRG).

The Family Assistant Network offers the service member and their family opportunities and resources to not only cope with deployment but to succeed within the military culture.

For more information or to find the FAN Coordinator in your area, please call: 1-800-449-9662 or visit us on the web: www.calguard.ca.gov/readyfamilies

Final Flight, Final Mission

By Senior Airman Nichole M. Coonce

It was a brisk morning and a lot of activity buzzed throughout the hallways of the base operations building. Two buses waited to take a handful of navigators, flight engineers, various personnel and press aboard two C-130E Hercules aircraft for the last time.

After 46 years of transporting personnel, cargo and fighting fires, the aircraft has finally been retired. As everyone boarded the aircraft and settled in, the crew looked at the inside of the aircraft as if for the first time. A look of adoration for the worn-down rivets and frayed netting was apparent.

Piloting the first aircraft was Lt. Col. Robert B. "Runt" George. As Colonel George taxied the Hercules out to the runway, airmen gathered just outside the flight line to take pictures while others waived as it pulled away.

Colonel George wasted no time in showing off his impressive handling of the large plane. Within minutes, all the passengers felt about 1g of force (similarly to what one would experience on a roller coaster) as he banked the aircraft over the Channel Island waters.

During the flight, the pilots switched back and forth to allow each of them to have a little time with the aircraft just once more.

Following Colonel George in the pilot seat was Maj. Mark L. Hutten, Lt. Col. Donald A. Haponski and finally Lt. Col. David M. Bakos.

The aircraft visited Van Nuys Airport, the original home of the 146th Airlift Wing prior to its move in 1988 to Port Hueneme (about 50 miles northwest of Los Angeles). After a quick touchdown, the plane returned to the air and headed to Palmdale airport for another touchdown before heading home.

Colonel Bakos was at the controls for the final banking over the Channel Islands before touching down the E-model one last time.

Two Federal Naval Fire Engines welcomed the aircraft home with arched streams of water. American and state flags were raised through the top hatch of each plane as they taxied in and came to a halt before guardsmen, alumni guardsmen, family and friends as the 562nd Air Force Band played the national anthem.

Upon exiting the plane, the crew members dowsed each other in

celebratory champagne as they laughed and embraced to the tune of "Those Magnificent Men in Those Flying Machines."

Previous Vice Commander, Retired Col. Ed Bellion gave a speech on the history of the C-130 Hercules and both he and current wing commander, Col. Steven D. Friedrichs recognized various personnel for their outstanding contributions to the aircraft and the wing.

Because of the new C-130J's upgrades, the positions of navigator and flight engineer have been eliminated requiring a minimum of three personnel versus the five needed on the E-model.

Colonel Friedrichs was one of the first crew members to fly the J-model some five years ago. While he is impressed with its increased power and speed, he expressed sorrow for the ripple effect left by the new aircraft.

"I feel sadness, not for the retirement of the aircraft—aircraft come and go—but for the loss of the flight engineers and the navigators. Their contributions to the wing over the many past decades is immeasurable. They are family and no one wants to see family go."

With this last flight, the E-model accumulated a total flying time of 46,410 hours and 27,052 hrs in the Air National Guard (or 3.1 years in the air), according to Colonel Bellion.

The retiring aircraft, they will be sent to Little Rock and Pope Air

Force Bases to be used for training.

The 146th Airlift Wing will receive two additional J-models over the next year and should have a total of eight by early 2008, according to Colonel Friedrichs.

"The wing is in a good position right now with the C-130J. There are many wings out there without an aircraft to fly or scheduled to be closed as a result of BRAC and DoD restructuring for the future. I expect the 146th to be around for many decades to come," said Friedrichs.

For many who have been flying the E-models their whole careers, the journey was bitter sweet.

For Colonel George, this flight was particularly poignant. Not only was this the C-130E's final flight, but it was his as well.

With more than 20 years in the military between the Navy and Guard, Colonel George is scheduled to retire and felt it was appropriate to go out with the E-model.

"I am happy to walk away [from the military] with the E-model," said Colonel George.

Colonel George is one of four guardsmen piloting their final military aircraft this day, but he will be the first among them to retire. He said it is easier to walk away with the retirement of the aircraft rather than watch the transition of the new J-model that he will never pilot.

"It was a nice way to end our careers," said Colonel George.

Lt. Colonel Scott Adams, an instructor/evaluator and navigator for 23 years at the 146th Airlift Wing, will be taking a new position on base.

With mixed emotions of sorrow and excitement, Colonel Adams said he had a lot of good memories and felt a camaraderie among his fellow airmen that was bonded by the aircraft.

"The end came too soon," said Colonel Adams.

Colonel Adams explained it was no secret about the transition from the E-model to the new and improved J-model C-130. The event was surreal and a wake-up call that the transition was actually happening. "I wish I could be a part of the future of the C-130 J, but I am happy to serve the wing in another way," said Colonel Adams.

A sincere thank you to the men and women who devoted much of their careers to this aircraft.

A special place for the E-model will reside in the heart of the 146th Airlift Wing.



Two fire trucks from Naval Air Station Point Mugu salute C-130E 62-1862 with arches of water as it completes its final mission for the 146th Airlift Wing. The arches are a tradition to welcome home an aircraft after its final flight and mission.

PHOTO: BRIAN LOCKETT



MC-130 Flight line Maintenance specialist, Staff Sergeant Clayton E. Kramer, of the 129th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron, removes a plastic chemical agent protective over boot prior to an aircrew member boarding an MC-130P aircraft during an Operational Readiness Exercise.



The salute battery from the 1-143rd Field Artillery Regiment fires its salvo to honor the outgoing commander at the change of command ceremony for the 40th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. The 40th IBCT recently converted to the new modular brigade structure and is the California National Guard's largest combat formation.



California National Guard soldiers from Petaluma, Calif. rehearse urban search and extraction techniques during a training exercise at the Santa Rosa Fire Department Training Center, Jan. 06, 2007. Their unit, the 235th Sapper Company, is part of the California National Guard's task force capable of assisting first responders in a state emergency.



Joint Forces Headquarters' staff gathers in remembrance of the life and work of Reverend Martin Luther King.



Lt. Colonel Ken O'Connor poses with Kid Rock. Kid Rock performed for troops throughout Iraq.



Chief Warrant Officer Mirko Duvnjak checks the flight map prior to take off for French Valley Airport, Murrieta, Calif. for the Red Ribbon Flyer mission designed to keep kids in the Murrieta Valley Unified School System off of drugs.



Brig. Gen. James Combs, commander 40th Infantry Division, conducts a review of troops prior to the change of command ceremony for the 40th Infantry Brigade Combat Team. Col. John Munozatkinson relinquished command to Col. David Baldwin after two years of transforming the brigade from a legacy mechanized infantry formation to the Army's new light modular structure.



Cover Photo: 11 - OH-58D's do a low flyby as 40th Brigade Engineers on the ground greet the aircraft.



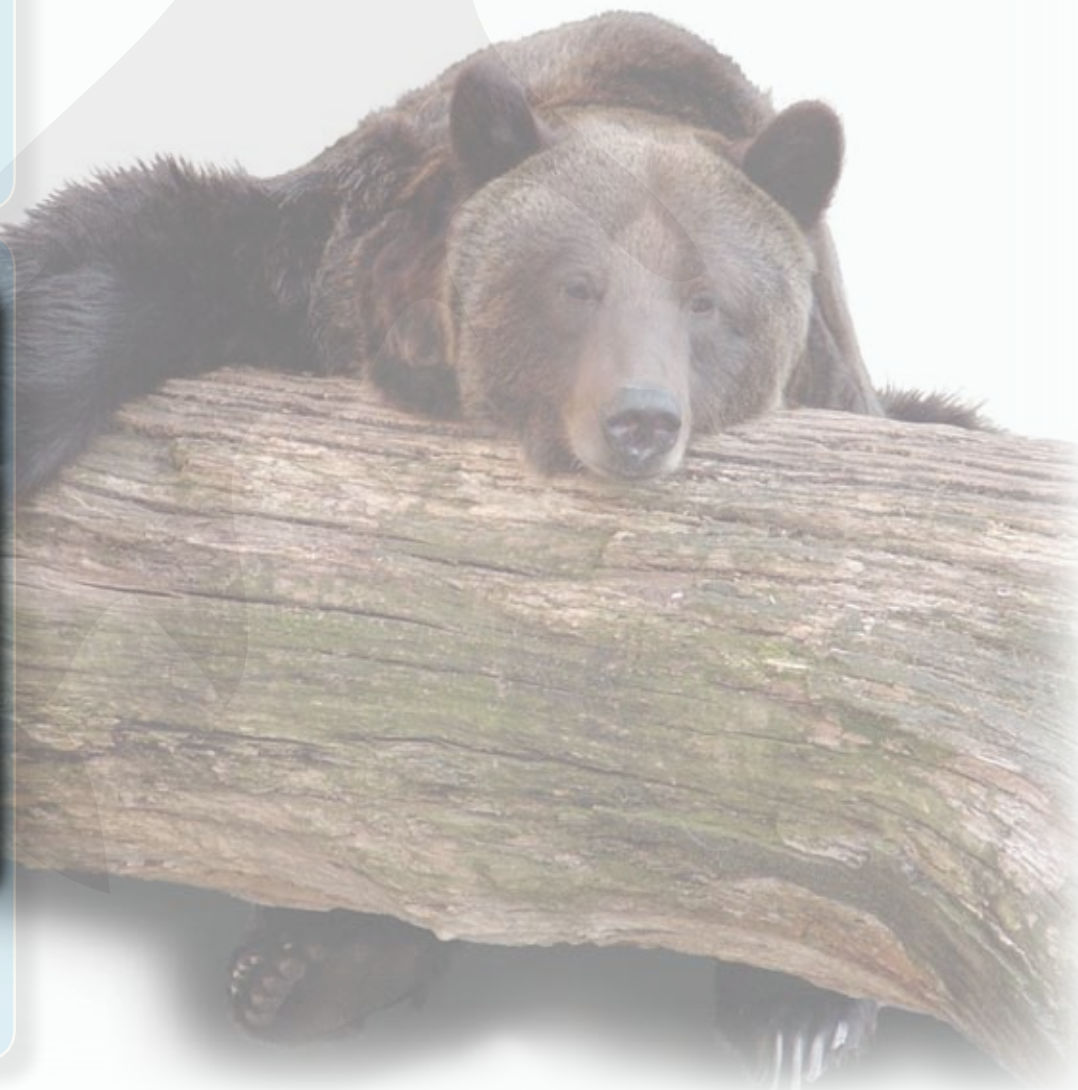
Maj. Daniel Markert, Information Operations Officer for the 40th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, conducts a communications check in the IC4U at an emergency response rehearsal in Santa Rosa, Calif. The IC4U is the California National Guard's premier communications suite that allows full interoperability with military and civilian first responders as well as secure satellite reach back and internet capabilities.

Stories and images submitted by:

- Master Sgt. Randy Orpe
- Master Sgt. Dan Kacir
- Maj. Daniel Markert
- Lt. Col. Robert Spano
- Staff Sgt. Robert Hensley
- Chief Warrant Officer Marc Yablanca
- Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo
- Master Sgt. Michael Drake
- Spec Michael Amicy



Spec. James Buenaflor, the Junior Enlisted Member of the Quarter, poses with Task Force Phoenix leadership (from left), Maj. Kenneth Shedarowich, Spec. James Buenaflor, Chief Master Sgt. Patti Rusconi and Master Sgt. Alfred Todd.



Chopper Crashes While Supporting U.S. Border Patrol

By Sgt. Eddie Siguenza

During a routine mission in support of Customs and Border Patrol, a Task Force Wily, UH-1 helicopter executed a forced emergency landing Jan 2 on Otay Mountain, approximately 20 miles southeast of downtown San Diego. The aircraft executed the harrowing landing with minimal available power from an altitude of approximately 350 feet. This exceptionally hard landing destroyed the aircraft. Fortunately, none of the four crewmembers, the five agents aboard or working dog sustained non-life threatening injuries. This is a tribute to the exceptional durability of the aircraft, skill of the pilot and co-pilot.

Despite the remote location and treacherous terrain at the landing site, emergency response teams arrived quickly and began rendering aid almost immediately. Some of the first responders on the scene were Guardsmen assigned to a nearby entry identification site (EITS) who utilized their combat lifesaver skills.

Colonel Ellsworth, TF Vista commander, commended various emergency response teams that reacted immediately after the incident.



Guardsmen, border agents saved from chopper crash

"I'm extremely impressed with the emergency response capability. The San Diego Police Department, San Diego Sheriff's Department, Highway Patrol, California Division of Forestry, Border Patrol, Coast Guard and the California National Guard all responded to the incident

within minutes," Ellsworth said. "That's truly amazing support and we do sincerely appreciate their efforts."

All were promptly evacuated to local hospitals and have since been released.

The mishap has been thoroughly investigated by a team dispatched from the Combat Readiness Center at Fort Rucker, Alabama. The team's findings and recommendations have been reviewed by all levels of command within the California Army National Guard. Implementation of the recommendations are underway to enhance the safe operation of our aircraft, as well as aircraft throughout the Army and Army National Guard.

The incident has not deterred the Guard's assistance to the Border Patrol. Less than a week later, TF Wily was airborne, performing its aerial missions.

"The mission itself is just a testament to the great Americans that believe in the security of our nation," Ellsworth said. "The military and Border Patrol are both high-risk missions, and this is a very unfortunate incident, but the mission will continue."

Due to sensitivity of the mission, the Uh-1 crew's names will not be released.



The most widely used military helicopter, the Bell UH-1 series Iroquois, better known as the "Huey", began arriving in Vietnam in 1963. Before the end of the conflict, more than 5,000 of these versatile aircraft were introduced into Southeast Asia. "Hueys" were used for MedEvac, command and control, and air assault; to transport personnel and materiel; and as gun ships. Considered to be the most widely used helicopter in the world, with more than 9,000 produced from the 1950s to the present, the Huey is flown today by about 40 countries

Immediate Response

By Maj Daniel Market



Airmen from the 146th Airlift Wing's Medical Group rapidly unload a modular medical treatment center during a domestic preparedness exercise, Jan. 6, 2007. The 146th Medical Group is part of a joint California Army and Air National Guard emergency response task force.

incident site, including damaged buildings; rescuing any casualties, decontaminating them, and performing medical triage and initial treatment to stabilize them for transport to a medical facility (this includes extracting anyone trapped in the rubble). "We have a big multi-agency exercise in April, so it is critical that we rehearse as a team with all our specialized equipment" says Lt. Col. Walter Goodwater, the CERFP Task Force Commander.

The CERFP is composed of four elements staffed by personnel from already established California National Guard units. The elements are search and ex-

traction, decontamination, medical, and command and control. The CERFP command and control team, the 579th Engineer Battalion, directs the overall activities of the CERFP and coordinates with the Joint Task Force - State and the Incident Commander. The CERFP search and extraction element mission is assigned to the 235th Sapper Company, the decontamination element mission is assigned to C Battery 143d Field Artillery, and the medical element mission is assigned to the 146th Airlift Wing's Air National Guard Medical Group. The security duties are performed by the 2668 Transportation Company.

The California National Guard conducted a full dress rehearsal with its Chemical Biological, Radiological, Nuclear, Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package (CERFP). Their mission is to provide immediate response capability to the Governor, searching an

traction, decontamination, medical, and command and control. The CERFP command and control team, the 579th Engineer Battalion, directs the overall activities of the CERFP and coordinates with the Joint Task Force - State and the Incident Commander. The CERFP search and extraction element mission is assigned to the 235th Sapper Company, the decontamination element mission is assigned to C Battery 143d Field Artillery, and the medical element mission is assigned to the 146th Airlift Wing's Air National Guard Medical Group. The security duties are performed by the 2668 Transportation Company.

The CERFP Search and Extraction element has been trained and certified to the basic operations level and can provide support from the Light to Heavy operations. The training received was in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1006 Standard for Rescue Technician Professional Qualifications, with emphasis on rescuer safety, breaching/breaking, debris lifting & moving, rigging techniques, and basic shoring concepts, which is the same type of training that civilian urban search and rescue teams receive. "This allows us to be tightly integrated with civilian urban search and rescue teams", says platoon leader 1st. Lt. Jose Dominguez. "The specialty training we received in Oklahoma City was top notch".

California National Guard Soldier from Petaluma, Calif. uses a manual pneumatic shear to lift concrete debris during an urban search and extraction training exercise at the Santa Rosa Fire Department Training Center, Jan. 06, 2007.



Brigadier General Walter Barham

Fairfield, Calif. - Brig. Gen Rod J. Barham, 49th Military Police Brigade commander was promoted during a ceremony January 6 at the Sgt. 1st Class Isaac Lawson Armory in Fairfield.

His daughter, Eileen Barham pinned his new rank on the newest California general. "Becoming a general officer is an emotional event for me. The faith and confidence the Soldiers have given me is unbelievable," Barham said before the ceremony.

The Georgia resident has commanded the 49th MP BDEs since 2005 and deployed to Iraq with the unit. They returned last September.

The 49th MP BDE deployed in support of Operation Iraq Freedom last year and was responsible for developing and implementing a police training team programs. Under his command, the brigade trained more than 100,000 Iraq police officers in 14 of the country's 18 provinces, he said.

The troops worked to increase the credibility of the nation's democratic institutions.



PHOTO: 69TH PCH HQ / 49TH MP BDE

Barham, specifically, offered support to not only the police but the Highway Patrol and Criminal Investigation Division as part of the Police Partnership Program in Iraq, working closely with Iraqi officials, he said.

Stateside, having a long-distance command is nothing new to Barham. Before his current assignment, Barham was the state DISCOM, (Division Support

Command) commander in Long Beach while he lived in San Diego.

"I rely heavily on my full-time and part-time staff and cause them to do their job," Barham said. "Because of the distance we're forced to communicate more and better." Barham calls his staff daily and sends frequent emails to keep the lines of communication open, he said.

This dialogue is essential to refocus the unit's priority from deployment.

"We need to be ready for California's famous four seasons: fires, floods, earthquakes and riots," Barham said. The 49th MP BDE is the state's northern task force for all emergencies.

His goal is to fill the ranks of the brigade with personnel, trained and proficient with their equipment.

Barham brings a wealth of experience to his new rank. He's served in the California Army National Guard for 27 years.

"Running an organization is the same whether it's civilian or military," Barham said.

By Sgt. Kara Greene

"The managerial skills necessary to create a vision and implement it are the same." Prior to deployment Barham worked for six years as CEO of Hot Dog on a Stick, the corndog franchise.

Barham attributed his professional success, in part, to the noncommissioned officers and Soldiers who have pushed, pulled, and carried him through the years, he said in his speech.



Brigadier Gen. Rod Barham is pinned his star by daughter, Eileen Barham, during a promotion ceremony held at the Isaac S. Lawson Armory in January.

Tax Season

Tax season has arrived! To help you decipher what tax exemptions and benefits are out there you are highly encouraged to go to the Internal Revenue Service webpage at: www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=97273,00.html and research Publication 3 (2005), Armed Forces' Tax Guide. Insure your Tax accountant is also well versed in military benefits and laws.

Corporate Partners Offer Free Tax Filing Service to Military Members

By Petty Officer 3rd Class Chris M. Hwang, USN

WASHINGTON, Jan. 23, 2006 – Military members and their families can now file their taxes for free, thanks to a partnership between a group that helps military people deal with financial issues and a civilian financial services company.

"Military OneSource" has partnered up with Intuit, a financial services company, to provide the TurboTax basic product for federal and state returns at no cost. Military members can download this program and also benefit from tax consultations and have access to appropriate resources. The Military OneSource Web site will provide annual upgrades to the TurboTax software at no cost.

"This tax consultant support for filing 2006 taxes is available telephonically toll free (800-342-9647) and at no cost to the servicemembers from any deployment location in the world," acting Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Military Community and Family Policy Jane Burke said. "Military OneSource tax consultants are also familiar with the IRS publication 'Armed Forces Tax Guide.'" Burke said DoD has a long history of offering tax assistance to military members, but this year the department is offering the opportunity for servicemembers to self-file electronically at no cost, using a popular software product that double checks for accuracy. "For many years, help has been available at many installations through the Voluntary Income Tax Assistance program. VITA volunteers will continue to be available through legal centers at most installations. VITA volunteers help servicemembers to file their taxes free of charge," said Burke.

Defense Department personnel noticed the need for a tax filing system that met military members' needs. TurboTax modifies itself based on the customer's information relevant to their unique tax situation. Providing an easier way to file taxes is an important quality-of-life issue, officials said. "DoD recognizes the reciprocal relationship that binds the military member, the military mission, and military families.

The Department is working hard to make a difference in the quality of life of servicemembers and their families," Burke said. "The Military OneSource program, available worldwide 24/7, leverages technology to help servicemembers and their families deal with the stresses of the military lifestyle. Providing access to electronic tax filing with the free telephonic support of a tax consultant is just one of the services offered by the Military OneSource service."

TurboTax customers can expect to see a new and improved way of filing their taxes as well. The easy-to-understand language allows users to feel more confident about the information they receive. Users can also click on an "Explain This" button within the TurboTax Web site to get relevant help. TurboTax also includes timesaving summary screens, allowing users to quickly review and edit their data.

"The department is proud to offer innovative options, like free electronic access to Turbo Tax and telephonic support, for addressing the challenges that military members and their dependents face. The Department of Defense recognizes that families also serve and is committed to supporting military families," Burke said.

Notifying the IRS by E-Mail about Combat Zone Service

Working with the Department of Defense, the Internal Revenue Service identifies taxpayers who are serving in a combat zone so that we may suspend compliance actions, such as audits or enforced collections, until 180 days after the taxpayer has left the zone.

Taxpayers qualifying for such combat zone relief may also notify the IRS directly of their status through a special e-mail address: combatzone@irs.gov. They should provide name, stateside address, date of birth and date of deployment to the combat zone. They should not include any social security numbers in an e-mail. This notification may be made by the taxpayer, spouse, or authorized agent or representative.

The IRS cannot provide tax account information by e-mail. Therefore, we will send responses to any questions about the taxpayer's account by regular mail to the address we have on record for the person, within two business days. We may provide general answers to questions regarding the status of individual combat zone updates via e-mail.

President Signs New Tax Legislation for Military Personnel

On May 29, President Bush signed the Heroes Earned Retirement Opportunities (HERO) Act, which amends the Internal Revenue Code to allow service members to still exclude their military compensation from federal income tax, but also contribute to an Individual Retirement Account (IRA) while serving in a combat zone tax exclusion area.

Military compensation earned by members of the armed forces while serving in combat zone areas is excluded from federal income tax. Enlisted members and warrant officers exclude all such military compensation. Commissioned officers exclude up to the maximum enlisted pay plus imminent danger pay for the months they serve in a combat zone tax exclusion area.

The HERO Act is retroactive to tax year 2004. Therefore, members who did not make an IRA contribution during 2004 or 2005, because they were not eligible due to combat zone tax exclusion, have until May 28, 2009 (three years from the date of enactment) to make a contribution to an IRA for those years.

How to reduce your interest rates

BY: 1ST LT Dwight Stirling
Command Judge Advocate

As a Soldier or Airman on active duty on, you can reduce the interest rate for most debts incurred prior to coming on the mission to six percent.

The debts that qualify for interest-reduction to six percent include credit cards, payday advances, mortgages, car loans, and all types of installment contracts, such as furniture rentals. The only debts that do not qualify are federally insured student loans.

Importantly, it does not matter whether the debt was incurred by you or by your spouse. As long as you are responsible for the debt as a co-signer, the debt qualifies for interest rate reduction.

One of the little known benefits of this law is that it affects more than just your interest rate. As a matter of fact, when you apply for an interest rate reduction, all charges connected to your account must be waived. These charges include service charges, renewal charges, transaction charges, and any other charge related to the balance. While they appear minor, these charges can add up to a lot of money, so you definitely want to have them eliminated.

Initiative! The interest rate reduction does not happen by itself, it is accomplished by you writing a letter to the creditor. The letter informs the creditor that you are on active duty and that your ability to pay on the debt has been materially affected by being on the mission. You will also need to attach a copy of your orders with the letter.

The paralegals at the Judge Advocate office can help you write this letter. Please have the specific account numbers for the debts you would like to reduce when you come by.

It is important to keep in mind that you must write this letter within 180 days of your coming on the mission. If you are in this position, you will want to come by the JAG office immediately for help in writing to your creditors.

Upon receiving your letter, your creditors must retroactively reduce all interest charges to six percent for the time you have been on the mission. This means that your creditors must recalculate the interest you owe in light of the reduction to six percent since your orders began.

The benefits of the interest rate reduction can add up to a significant savings. Do not let these savings go to waste. Come by the JAG office and we will help you save yourself a nice chunk of change!

Financial Tips and Information

If you or your spouse is deploying:

- Save enough in an emergency fund to cover essential costs such as housing and food for at least several months. Other sources for emergency money include a home equity line of credit or a loan from life insurance cash values.
- Prepare a realistic post-activation budget. It will allow you to better prepare for cuts and motivate you more to build up savings.
- Families of activated personnel are allowed to shop at any nearby military base stores, where goods and services are usually less expensive.
- Determine eligibility for the military health program, TRICARE.
- Reduce debt. Credit-card and other consumer debt can be financially devastating if the family faces a serious decline in income.
- Avoid off-base payday lenders, which can increase family debt.
- Designate someone in advance to manage the household finances and be sure they are up to speed with the finances before leaving. Single-parent families, or families where both spouses are called up, will need to rely on a relative, friend or professional help such as a bill-paying service or financial planner.

Whether your family already has someone on active duty or may soon, be aware of the many special financial rights that may be available to you. Activated reservists or National Guard, or deployed regular military, are generally covered under the recently enacted Service Member's Civil Relief Act, which strengthens the original 1940 Soldiers' and Sailors' Civil Relief Act. Key rights include:

- Prevention of eviction from rental property when rent is less than \$2,400 a month (indexed for inflation)
- The ability to break a housing or auto lease
- Temporary stays of civil proceedings such as bankruptcy, foreclosure or divorce
- The ability to cap interest rates at six percent on pre-existing loans, such as credit cards and mortgages. But you must notify the lenders in order to get the cap.

Another key law to become familiar with is the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA). USERRA provides certain rights to employees who must leave work because of a call-up. Among those rights:

- Employees must get back the position they held or would have held (such as through seniority) if they had not been called up, though the employer can have some legitimate reasons for not rehiring, such as an elimination of the position.
- This rehire right supersedes the right of any replacement hire.
- The employee's family can continue health coverage under the employer's group plan, though they must pay for the entire cost of the coverage (known as COBRA). They're guaranteed this coverage even if they join the military health program.
- Military time served counts toward vesting for retirement plans, and the employee can make up missed retirement contributions after returning to work.
- The employee is protected against arbitrary firing after returning to work.

Employers are not required to pay employees during their active duty, though the majority of employers cover some or even all of the gap between the employee's military pay and their civilian pay. Activated and deployed military personnel receive special federal tax breaks. Military income earned by soldiers in combat zones is tax-free and they don't have to file taxes until 180 days after their return. They also get an extension on the home sale rules that give one a tax break on the profits from the sale of a home. They're also entitled to tax breaks on childcare assistance and certain travel.

For additional information on tax breaks, rights, financial assistance and financial planning, families should contact military support offices, their financial planner or family support Web sites such as www.nmfa.org

40th IBCT Change of Command

By Staff Sgt. Jessica Inigo

CAMP ROBERTS, Calif. (Jan. 7, 2007) Col. David S. Baldwin took command of the California Army National Guard's newly structured 40th Infantry Brigade Combat Team here, pledging to lead the troops through wartime training efforts.

Colonel John B. Munoz Atkinson passed the reins of command to Baldwin during a change-of-command ceremony filled with military traditions and honors on the Camp Roberts parade field. This was the first change-of-command ceremony for the brigade, which stretches over 540 miles across California, from the Mexico border to the Redwood forest.

Standing before troops from the six different units in the brigade, the new commander gave a short speech outlining his one focus coming into command. He simply said, "Our country is at war. I look forward to serving you in that effort," and returned to his seat to shake hands with Col. Munoz Atkinson and Brig. Gen. James P. Combs, the reviewing officer and commanding general of the 40th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and post commander of the Joint Forces Training Base in Los Alamitos, Calif.

Combs remarked on how well Munoz Atkinson led the 40th IBCT throughout the nearly two years he was in command and how much they would be missed. "I know he's dying inside," Combs started out his speech, but jokingly added that "life must go on." Combs laid out exactly what "life going on" would be for the in-coming commander. Efforts such as maintaining



PHOTO: STAFF SGT. ROBERT HENSLEY

the family resource centers, platoon level proficiency, sustaining a 100 percent readiness posture, and successfully deploying the 1st Battalion, 160th Infantry to Iraq later this year, are most important, according to Combs.

He said during his speech that Baldwin and his family are fully capable of following in the footsteps of their predecessors and was excited to have them back in the brigade. Munozat-

kinson is headed Fort Monroe, Virg., as the chief of staff for the Army National Guard Training and Doctrine Command.

In a heart-felt speech to the troops, the outgoing commander took a moment to remember Soldiers who were injured or killed during his command, as well as reflect on all the hard work of the unit. Before relinquishing command, Munoz Atkinson thanked the

various leaders he worked with and highlighted the work the soldiers accomplished.

He thanked the troops and said, "Without you and your families, this brigade would not have had any of the success we all have enjoyed." Munozatkinson left the podium by saying that the 40th IBCT remained in great hands

1114th to Receive Donated Phone Cards

By 2nd Lt. Theresa M. Chrystal

Members of the 1114th Transportation Company will soon be receiving a welcome surprise from their company commander during mail call.

On January 10, 2007, Mr. Matthew C. Kramer, Warden for the legendary Folsom State Prison, presented Col. David B. Nickels, 115th Regional Support Group, Brigade Commander, with 192 international, prepaid phone cards. The phone cards are being given to Col. Nickels's subordinate unit, the 1114th, which is currently deployed to Iraq.

According to Warden Kramer, a fundraiser was held at the prison where over \$4,000 in proceeds was earned through a pizza sale. In a letter addressed to Col. Nickels, Mr. Kramer stated, "In addition to giving the gift of communication our military personnel overseas for their family, friends, and loved ones back home, the staff and inmates of Folsom State Prison would like to extend our sincere admiration and appreciation for the personal sacrifice our mobilized soldiers have given to our great Country to insure our continued freedom."

The phone cards will be a welcome treat for the approximately 170 Soldiers who have been deployed since August 2006. With limited resources available, the ability to call home for free will bring a smile to many faces.

Col. Nickels told the Warden and his staff that their gifts would be a huge morale booster. He stated, "It enables [the troops] to better perform their mission without having to worry about what's happening at home with their families. It is imperative for our members to be able to communicate with their families as it becomes a combat multiplier."

The members of the 1114th are expected to return home this fall.



PHOTO: SPEC. MICHAEL AMLEY

Mr. Mathew C. Kramer presents 192 phone cards to Col. David B. Nickels

CAMP CHRISTMAS

LETTER FROM 145TH ENGINEERS

By Capt. Lorren Deakin

On the 5th day of December 2006, the 145th Engineer Company deployed two platoons to a location that we referred to as Camp Christmas. This location is not a named location on a map. It is just a grid coordinate located 40 kilometers southwest of Forward Observation Base (FOB) Salerno in the mountains of Afghanistan. At an elevation of 6,000 feet (just at the snow line) and 10 kilometers north of the Pakistan border this location would once have been considered in the heart of Taliban country. However, for 15 days the 145th Engineer Company lived on this piece of Afghanistan.

Our higher headquarters ordered us to establish a construction base camp from which to work. The purpose was to move our equipment closer to the location the work site to accomplish more on the road we were building, and to provide additional supervision on the local national contractors with whom we were working with. The mission was to complete the road to a border security point, operated by the Afghan military, before the weather made the road impassible and construction impossible. The two platoons were given the warning order and started getting everything together for the operation. A week prior to moving out, we conducted a reconnaissance of the area and selected a location that we determined to be the most defensible. After the recon the operation order was finalized and issued. On the 5th we moved out to the site of our construction camp – Camp Christmas.

For the first two days of the operation we established our construction camp. We built fighting positions for our vehicles and



Captain Lorren Deakin poses at the "Camp Christmas Photo Studio".

dug-in sleeping areas. Improving the security of the camp continued throughout the operation. Soldiers conducted patrols of the area around the camp, and emplaced wire and hescos up until the day prior to our return back to FOB Salerno.

The rest of that week we worked on the road with our equipment and with local contractors. Security at the construction camp was maintained by the vertical construction platoon while the horizontal platoon worked on the road during the day, both platoons provided security during

the night. Progress on construction was slow due to the rockiness and terrain. Construction of the road that week went along the bottom of a wadi. The wadi itself was approximately 3km long and filled with extremely large boulders. Some of the boulders were so large that we needed two of the contractor's D8 dozers to move them. By the end of the week we had completed the section in the wadi and began moving up the sides of the mountains to a small village at the 8,000 ft elevation level.

We received intelligence reports on the eighth night of the operation that an attack by ACM (Anti-Coalition Militia) was imminent. The report specifically stated that the engineers building a road in a near by village (less than two kilometers away) were going to be attacked. We passed the information on to the sergeant of the guard and the Soldiers on guard duty. Tension that night was very high, but the night passed without incident.

The next day the Chief of Police for the District and three elders from two of the nearby villages came to our camp to tell us of the impending attack. This seemed to reinforce the intelligence report from the previous night. They

also offered to help us. (This isn't something that you hear in the news but it happens here with some frequency. The local population wants to help the United States Army against the ACM.)

While we appreciated their offer, we declined it we did not want any additional casualties. Just before dark we conducted a test fire of our crew-served weapons. Apparently, the sound of MK-19 grenade launchers, M2 .50 caliber machine guns, and 240B machine guns was enough to persuade the ACM not to visit that night either. Periodic overflights by Blackhawk and Apache helicopters for the remainder of our operation kept the nights peaceful.

The success of the mission at Camp Christmas relied greatly on the cooperation of the California Army National Guard Soldiers and the local population and contractors. The Soldiers of the 145th have made great strides working with local contractors, and developing friendships with the people living along the roads in Afghanistan. The villagers coming to tell us of an impending attack and the offer to help demonstrates how well the Soldiers of the 145th have done waging the war on terror by winning friends in Afghanistan.





Army Families First Casualty Call Center

The Army’s Families First Casualty Call Center (FFCCC) is a one-stop resolution center established to assist surviving family members of deceased Army Soldiers with questions regarding benefits, outreach, advocacy and support. Our mission is to provide long-term support and advocacy, and offer comprehensive solutions to the families of fallen Soldiers by partnering with private and public organizations, in addition to various outreach groups.

Who is eligible to use the Families First services?

Family members of deceased Soldiers are eligible to obtain assistance, support, and referral information. FFCCC will provide assistance to spouses, children and parents, as well as extended family members of fallen Soldiers.

How can the Families First Casualty Call Center be reached?

The FFCCC team is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

Phone: (866) 272-5841
Website: www.ArmyFamiliesFirst.army.mil
Email: FFCCC@conus.army.mil
Fax: (703) 325-2074

Mail: Army Human Resources Command
ATTN: AHRC-PEC (FFCCC)
200 Stovall Street
Alexandria, VA 22332

Available Resources

Survivor Benefits	Reports	Soldiers Services	Support Programs
<div><input type="checkbox"/> Death Gratuity (DG) eligibility</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) eligibility</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Montgomery GI Bill</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC)</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Survivors Benefit Plan (SBP)</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Social Security</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Relocating, transportation, and travel</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Criminal Investigations Division (CID)</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Line of Duty (LOD)</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Collateral Investigation (AR 15-6)</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Autopsy Report</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Casualty and Mortuary services</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Awards and citations</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Posthumous promotions</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Pay and allowances</div>	<div><input type="checkbox"/> Tragedy assistance peer support programs</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Stress management</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Peer mentoring</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Bereavement counseling</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Emergency financial services</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Military legal assistance and referrals</div> <div><input type="checkbox"/> Health services</div>

Battle Uniform Available to Deploying Airmen

The Airman Battle Uniform is on track for distribution this spring to Airmen deploying as part of Air Expeditionary Forces 7 and 8. Most Airmen will get two ABU sets and two Desert Combat Uniform sets for their deployment. By October 2007, the Air Force will begin issuing the ABU to Airmen in basic military training, and in June 2008, the uniform will be available for purchase by the rest of the Air Force in Army Air Force Exchange Service outlets. The cost for the uniform, pants and coat, runs about \$81. Additional items will also need to be purchased. The green boots are priced at \$100. The expected mandatory wear date for the new ABU is October 2011.

Students Create Scrapbooks for Troops

Teachers and students from across the United States are sending in handmade scrapbook pages with special messages for military men and women serving overseas as part of the Connect With the Troops project. Over 20,000 pages have been sent in so far. All of the pages will be scanned and digitized and will be archived at the Library of Congress as part of its Veteran's History Project. For more information contributing to what is being billed as the World's Largest and Greatest Scrapbook, visit the Connect With the Troops website at <http://www.connectwiththetroops.com/>

Free Harlem Globetrotters Tickets

As a result of a special arrangement between the U.S. Army Family & MWR Command and the Harlem Globetrotters, patrons of on-base Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force and Coast Guard ITR and ITT offices can purchase substantially discounted tickets for all games at all locations scheduled for 2007. Just visit the Harlem Globetrotters website at <http://www.harlemglobetrotters.com/events/> to access information and schedules for games in your state. Then, contact your servicing ITR or ITT office to purchase your discounted tickets for any game for the current tours.

AF Career Tool Now Online

My Enlisted Development Plan, or MyEDP, is an online enlisted career development tool designed to provide standardization in every aspect of career progression. It can be accessed from anywhere that Internet service is available. Once an Airman has established an account -- a process that takes less than two minutes -- he or she will be able to view news, events, forums, a library, and even personnel records and career information. Airmen can visit MyEDP by going to the Air Force Portal at <https://www.my.af.mil/faf/FAF/fafHome.jsp> and clicking on "Life & Career," then clicking on "Learning & Development."

Warning Issued Concerning Candy

A warning has been sent out through military channels concerning a new candy spreading across the United States called chronic candy. It contains essential hemp oil, which is illegal for servicemembers to ingest. Studies have shown that products made with hemp seed and hemp seed oil may contain tetrahydrocannabinol, which is an active ingredient of marijuana that is detectable under the Federal drug testing program. Failure to comply with the prohibition on ingestion of products containing or products derived from hemp seed or hemp seed oil is a violation of Article 92 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ).

Military Channel, Military.com, Reconnect America

Throughout 2007, the Military Channel and Military.com will spotlight a different military-focused charity through monthly on-air and online promotions. The website <http://www.ReconnectAmerica.com> will serve as a portal to all charities in the program and provide the tools people need to make a difference in the military community. Visitors to the site can make online donations, send e-cards to servicemembers, post their thoughts on message boards, watch video postings from the frontline and access a "military-buddy" locator database. For more information, visit <http://www.ReconnectAmerica.com>.

Find Out about TRICARE Plus

TRICARE Plus is a primary care enrollment program offered at selected military treatment facilities. If you are enrolled in TRICARE Prime or Medicare Advantage HMO, you are not eligible for Plus because you already have a primary care relationship. TRICARE Plus is not available at all military treatment facilities, and it does not guarantee access to specialty care at the military treatment facility where you are enrolled. TRICARE Plus is not a portable benefit. Your enrollment at one facility does not guarantee access at another facility. For more information about TRICARE Plus, call 1-888-DOD-LIFE (1-888-363-5433), or visit the TRICARE Website at <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/>.

Blue Angels Announce 2007 Show Schedule

The Navy Flight Demonstration Squadron, the Blue Angels, has announced their schedule for the 2007 show season. Following winter training, the team will begin its 61st season at Naval Air Facility El Centro, Calif., March 10, 2007, and will conclude Nov. 10 at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Fla. The Blue Angels are scheduled to perform 66 demonstrations at 35 air show sites throughout the United States, as they celebrate 20 years of flying the Boeing F/A-18 Hornet. For the most updated schedule information, the Blue Angels Website at <http://www.blueangels.navy.mil>





Members of the 145th Engineer Company, CAARGN on patrol during OEF VII near Sperkay Village in Easter Afghanistan.

Grizzly Newsletter is published by the Directorate of Communications
California National Guard 9800 Goethe Road Sacramento CA 95827.

Views and opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army, the Department of the Air Force or the California State Military Department. Grizzly Newsletter is an official publication authorized under the provisions of AR 360-1 and AFI 35-101. Grizzly Newsletter welcomes manuscripts photographs and feedback. All such items should be sent to:

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